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## Namibia: Seal Report Yet to Be Implemented - Walters

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BY ADAM HARTMANN, 8 OCTOBER 2012

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THE Ministry of Fisheries has yet to implement recommendations the Ombudsman made earlier this year to help minimise

In June, Ombudsman John Walters released a report containing his findings after complaints by animal rights activists about harvest.

Although Walters concluded that the harvest was sustainable and not contrary to the country's Constitution or the Marine loopholes and also expressed concern about the ministry's reluctance to share information openly.

The report stated that there were currently an estimated 1,2 million seals in Namibia (600 000 cows, 350 000 bulls and 2 sustainable and that the total allowable catch (TAC) had been, and was currently, "rationally linked to the seal population"

This was the answer to concerns that there were not enough seals in Namibia to justify the current TAC of 80 000 pups a

Walters's recommendations included amendments to regulations under the Marine Resources Act, and more disclosure o

Walters told The Namibian that since he had made the recommendation in June, he had not received any feedback from t added that they would be granted "reasonable time" to consider and implement his recommendations.

"The harvest is still going on and that may be part of the delay, but one must also understand that these are just recomme

"By next year though I would like to know whether the recommendations were considered and implemented, but for now,

He called on the Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources, Bernhard Esau, to consider independent monitoring of seal

information from a welfare perspective.

"It is also in the public's interest that information regarding the total number of the seals, quota sizes, and the actual number published annually," Walters recommended.

According to him, Esau also did not publish the texts of all conservation and management measures adopted under any ir party in the Government Gazette, and that this "should be done without delay".

As for amendments to regulations, Walters stated that Regulation 18 of the Marine Resources Act should be amended ar Act. According to him, there is conflict between the legal provisions regarding the right to harvest seals.

"Although the practical effect of the inconsistency between the provisions is limited, I agree that such inconsistency is und said.

He said Regulation 20, which deals with the manner in which the seals are harvested, should also be amended. The amer by shooting, adult seals must be bled out"; and that "seals (pups and adults) should be bled out as soon as possible - pre successfully stunned or shot, and then they should be checked to ensure they are irreversibly unconscious or dead."

Another amendment in Regulation 20 is that "right holders are compelled to erect temporary closures where pups, not ex settle down before they are released and clubbed."

In his final report, Walters concluded that the ministry's "compliance with my recommendations will be monitored".

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